factors, including the export schemes. (During the last Four years the total exports value exceeds Rs. 5,00,000 crores).

(c) and (d) There has been a regular mechanism for monitoring export obligation which the exporters, operating under different export schemes, are subjected to. This indirectly takes care of monitoring of the earnings of foreign exchange under these schemes. Prior to 1.4.95, the requirement for submission of Bank Realisation Certificate (BRC) evidencing realisation of export proceeds was provided for under some of the export scheme like the advance licencing scheme, but the same was discontinued with effect from 1.4.95 in consideration of the fact that the Reserve Bank of India was already monitoring the realisation of export proceeds and it was felt that there was no need to duplicate this work. However, in the light of the observations made by the Public Accounts Committee in its 24th Report relating to Advance Licencing Scheme, the Government has now decided to reintroduce the requirement of production of BRC before redeeming advance licences w.e.f. 13.4.98. Likewise, in the case of Duty Exemption Pass Book (DEPB) Scheme, a condition has been put that the DEPB credit would be allowed to be transferred only after the proof of realisation of export proceeds is furnished by the exporter.

Consolidation of Export Promotion Scheme

2147. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are shaping all their present export promotion schemes into "one grand export promotion scheme" and also promises "Credit at attractive interest rates' and free port to boot" as reported in the Economic Times, dated the 19th June, 1998; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof indicating Government's proposed export targets during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) In response to the persistent demand of the exporters to provide a single attractive export scheme, free from procedural hassles, the Ministry of Commerce is presently studying the feasibility of such a scheme, which would also be compatible with WTO parameters.

(b) The details of the new scheme, shall be finalised in consultation with other concerned Ministries of the Government of India at the appropriate time.

Import of wheat from Australia

2148. SHRI M. VENKAIAHNAIDU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Probe into 950 crore wheat deal ordered" that appeared in the Hindustan Times dated the 20th May, 1998;

(b) whether any progress has been made in this regard;

(c) the quantum of wheat which was to be imported from Australia and the contracted price thereof;

(d) the availability of wheat in the stock of Government and the requirement of wheat of the country when the deal was struck with Australia; and

(e) the circumstances which compelled Government to import the wheat?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The Government have noted the New-item which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated 20th May, 1998. Captioned "Probe into 950 crore wheat deal ordered".

Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) had requested the Deptt. of Food & Civil Supplies to furnish a factual report on the wheat import deal and accordingly the requisite report was furnished to CVC on 6th May, 1998 by that Deptt. Central Bureas, Investigation (CBI) sought relevant records regarding import of wheat by STC and the Ministries of Commerce and Food have made these available to CBI. Based on an assurance given by the Minister of Food & Consumer Affairs during the discussions on a calling Attention Motion regarding import of wheat on 9.6.98, necessary action is being taken by the Deptt. of Food & Civil Supplies.

A quantity of 7.53 lakh MT of wheat has arrived at the Indian Ports as on 22.6.98.

(c) STC contracted for import of 15 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia on FOB basis @ US $ 142.50 per tonne during 1998-99.

(d) and (e) The stocks of wheat in the central pool as on 1st January, 1998 was 67.56 lakh tonnes as against 77 lakh tonnes required to be maintained as per the buffer stock norms prescribed. Due to the untimely rains during the sowing season, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that production of wheat during 1997-98 (marketed during 1998-99) was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. After considering the relevant factors, the Govt. decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, against which STC has already contracted for import of 15 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia.

Export Potential of Information Technology

2149. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any assessment has been made of the export potential of the Information Technology from India;

(b) if so, the details of the broad pattern emerging for the different regions of the World, say, for the next ten years; and

(c) the steps being taken to identify and encourage Indian software and other services in Information Technology available in specific regions/towns of the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir. Department of Electronics and Electronics Computer Software Export Promotion Council have made the assessment.

(b) Presently the major markets for exports in this sector are USA, Canada, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Asia etc. More than 80% of our exports are going to above mentioned countries. Efforts are being made to develop Africa, Latin America, Russia, CIS, Middle East, Japan, Korea and Far East as our future markets.

(c) Department of Electronics has already established 7 Software Technology Parks (STPs) one each at Bangalore, Bhubneshwar, Hyderabad, Gandhinagar, Noida, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram.

DOE has formulated policy guideline for providing assistance to new STPs promoted with state initiative. Under this provision, new STPs have been supported one each at Mohali (Punjab), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra).

Export of non-basmati rice

2150. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for sharp fluctuations in the exports of rice, particularly, non-basmati rice in the recent past;

(b) whether the credibility of the country is suffering because of undependable supplies; and